

What is the Difference between Sunnis and Shiites?

What is the Difference between Sunnis and Shiites?

Religion or History and Politics?

By: Ahmad ALKATIB

Preface

Part One : One Religion

Chapter One: The Doctrines

Study #1 : Similarities in Doctrines

(The basis of doctrines such as oneness of God, prophecy and resurrection)

Study # 2 : Difference in Ideology

(The Imamate Doctrine)

Study # 3 : Ghulu and Ghulat (Those who exaggerate)

Ahl Al Bayt Imams' Attitudes towards the Ghulat

The Position of Shiites on Ghulat

Recent Ghulu Phenomena

Ghulat and the Akhbari Curriculum

Study # 4 : The Discourse of Distorting the Koran

Study # 5 : Al Taqiyah (Dissimulation)

Chapter Two : Primary Sources of Legislation

Study # 1 : The Holy Koran

Study # 2 : Prophetic Tradition

Criticizing Sunni Hadith Books

Shiites Science of Men

Study # 3 : Consensus

Study # 4 : Rational Evidence

Chapter # 3 : Jurisprudence

Study #1 : Controversial Jurisprudential Issues

Temporary Marriage (Mut'a)

Shiites Evidence for its Permissibility

Sunni Evidence for Mut'a Prohibition

Degree of Prohibition

Divulging when Necessary

Sahih Hadiths about Mut'a

Part Two : Dissimilarity in History and Politics

Chapter # 1 : History

Study # 1 : Attitude towards the Companions

1) The Early Islamic Theory

The Measure of Good Deeds

The Great Schism

The Umayyad Propaganda

Muttazalites Criticize the Companions

2) The Sunni Theory about the Companions

Definition of a Companion

Absolute Generalization in Merit

The Equity of the Companions Theory

Keeping Silent about What Happened between the Companions And the Obligation to Love and Praise them, also Asking for Forgiveness for them

Charging those who Curse the Companions with Disbelief

Selective Takfir (Proclaiming Someone as a Disbeliever)

3) Shiite Stand Regarding the Companions

A) The Early Positive Stand

B) The Second Stand (After Adopting the Imamate Theory)

Rewriting History Attempt

The Legend of Attacking the House of Fatima Al Zahra'

Tribal Power Significance when Giving Allegiance to Abu Bakr

Sunni Narrations

Shiite Narrations

1) Ibrahim Al Thikafi Narration 2) Salim Bin Qays Al Hilali Narration What

Does Salim Narration Say? Sheikh Al Mufid Position on Salim's Book

Safavids Role in Fueling Schism

C) Shiites Today

Chapter #2 : The Role of Supplications and Imams' Graves Visitations in Giving Rise to a Sacred History

The Book : "Heavens' Key" as a Model Fabricated Supplications Containing Falsehood

"Al Kasa'" Narration

"The Day of Ghadeer" Supplication Imams' Graves Visitations Arafa

Visitation Ashura Visitation The Major Comprehensive Visitation

Chapter # 3 : Politics

The Political Constitutional Theory Controversy The Practical Significance of this Controversy Diminished Today

Part # 3 : The Way to Unity

Practical Steps for Attaining Islamic Unity

Sources

Other Books by the Author

Translator's Commentary

I was thrilled when Mr Alkatib told me that I can write a commentary on the book to express my own views about it. I would like to sincerely thank him for giving me such an opportunity. A good number of facts presented in this book were news to me. While I agree with a number of its points, I stand a bit confused at some other ones. Mr Alkatib mentions a few times in his book the Sunni Theory about the Equity of all of the Companions. He also mentioned a Muttazalilte Zaidi saying about how Sunnis took the companions as gods. This statement came as a shock to me. Is that how Sunnis are viewed by the rest of the Muslims? Do Sunnis actually consider the companions infallible? My immediate answer is "Of course not! How

can Sunnis consider the companions infallible when they admit that Muawiyah erred when fought against imam Ali? ". Is the "Equity of all of the Companions" theory a misunderstood one? Do Sunnis refuse to dwell on the past in order to avoid a new schism between Muslims? Sheikh Shaltut from Al Azhar mosque, has issued a fatwa back in 1959 that had accepted the Jafari school of thought as a valid Islamic school which can be followed by Muslims. He made it as valid and equal to the other four Sunni schools of thought. This has always puzzled me, how can that be? Sheikh Shaltut, being a Sunni scholar, must have rejected the Godly Imamate doctrine and this very belief is in contradiction with the rest of the Sunni schools of thought. How can he then declare it to be valid? What had he seen in it that many others have failed to see? After some discussions with Mr Alkatib, it dawned on me. A school of thought must only include jurisprudential issues while the Imamate ideology adopted by Twelver Shiites must be a political one. I stand to be corrected but it is my belief that the Jafari school of thought does not teach the Imamate doctrine. The creation versus the non creation of the Holy Koran debate in this book also surprised me. Can we so simply declare someone a disbeliever for not adopting a firm stand on this issue? Would this mean that the average Muslim who has never heard of this old debate, let alone take a stand on it, is considered to be a disbeliever? Unsatisfied and unconvinced, I find myself wanting to further my research on this topic. What I liked the most about this book was the fact that it's open for discussion. Mr Alkatib allows everyone to join in with their own opinions and welcomes feedbacks. While the book doesn't solve all of the Islamic umma problems, it at least brings some conflicts to the table to be discussed. It sheds light on some misconceptions and misunderstandings on both sides.

Lastly, my whole intention of translating this book was to help bring Sunnis and Shiites one step closer to understanding each other. We have a larger purpose in life than to hold grudges against each other, life is too short to waste it on hate. I urge everyone to help stop the shed of blood between Muslims throughout the world. This book is a call to all Muslims to unite. Perhaps if we learn to coexist then we can build a strong Islamic unity and present the real picture of Islam to the world. We owe it to ourselves and our children to show the love and compassion that our religion teaches us. Let's leave this world just a little bit better than the way it was handed over to us.

Any mistakes done in the translation is my own fault and any good that comes out of my work is dedicated to my beloved brother Wael, may God have mercy on his soul.

Hazar Audi

July, 2008

Preface: Who are the Shiites? Who are the Sunnis?

It might seem to some people as a good thing to make the Shiite/Sunni controversy seem as an ideological deeply rooted and imperishable conflict that cannot be resolved till Judgment Day. I, on the other hand,

believe that it is, to a great degree, a political conflict that has been bypassed over the years. Although at one point in the immemorial history it had a political meaning, today it has lost its meaning and lost any reason for its continued existence as Muslims' lives have hugely evolved since the time it had started. And what's left over of it are simple differences that don't amount to a serious conflict, let alone a conflict that leads Muslims to kill each other over it. To get rid of such bitter precipitates we should compare these differences to all other different factors that had an effect on us in our daily lives, which we should also get rid of to build a strong Islamic unity. The denominational Shiite/Sunni controversy has not been and is not the only conflict in our Islamic history. There have been and there are still bitter differences within every sect, within Shiism and within Sunnism, in addition to nationalistic, tribal, caste, and party differences that have caused huge problems over the years and still do.

This enables us to say that the Shiite/Sunni difference is a lot smaller than those other differences and that, in reality, there is no real serious conflict on the outside except for personal psychological build ups and simple issues, also the existence of some anxiety found in the hearts of extremists and exaggerators (ghulat) in both sects. In any case, these extremists and exaggerators are small in number and are secluded. Before we go on any further, we should define the "Sunna" and "Shia" terminologies so we can point out the differences between them and use it as a preliminary to resolve this conflict and get rid of its bitter precipitates. It is for certain that the obvious clear meaning of the first terminology (Sunna) is the following of the Sunna of the great messenger Mohammad (puhhp). This cannot be in contradiction with Shiat Ahl Al Bayt (siding with Ahl Al Bayt) which also include following the Sunna (of the prophet). Based on this we see that Sunnis are Shiat Ahl Al Bayt and Shia is an important part of Sunna. Some time passed before the birth of Islamic sects during which no one felt a contradiction between the two concepts and no one felt a need to belong to one or the other. It is possible that Shiat Imam Ali Bin Abi Talib (pbuh) were Ahl Al Sunna wal Jamaa when it came to defend him against Khawarij (those who opposed him). But later on both terminologies (Shia and Sunni) grew apart and developed into two separate sects or more. Before the two terminologies stabilized into what they're known today, back in the second Hijra century the terminology of "Sunna" meant "Hadith Nabawi" (ie prophet's hadith) as it was agreed on by "Ahl Al Hadith" who labeled anyone who rejected the "Sunna" as an innovator. In the third century Hanbalis (ie Ahl Al Sunna) labeled Mutazala and Hanafis as innovators. At the time, also, Ahl Al Sunna (ie Ahl Al Hadith) considered Ahl Al Bayt Imams as their own Imams. Ahl Al Sunna terminology didn't widen up its circle to include the four schools of thought that are known today (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii, and Hanbali) until the fifth Hijra century despite the continued competition among the schools of thought for a long time. Hanbalis and Ahl Al Hadith kept on questioning the Hanafis', Asharites' and Maturidites' (who made up most of the Sunnis) Sunnism until this day, and only accept them as Sunnis in a general sense as opposed to Shiites and based on some standards.

Shia in the past was inclusive to all of Imam Ali's allies, followers, army and the masses of people who loved him during his governing years. This made up most of the Muslim public. However, the definition of "Shia" has shrunk over the years. Throughout history a "Shia" became simply someone who preferred Imam Ali over all other sahaba (prophet's companions) or someone who claimed that Imam Ali had a Godly right to the caliphate. Also a "Shia" (or Rafidha) became someone who criticized Muawiyah Bin Abi Sufian or Uthman Bin Affan or anyone else from the sahaba. Thus a lot of Muslims from Ahl Al Sunna circle left it and entered the "Shia" circle despite the fact that a mix of both circles was followed by a lot of people especially Ahl Al Hadith sheikhs who used to mix between the two since both had a lot of common points.

Today the word "Shia" is used to label those who believe in the Godly chosen Imams of Ahl Al Bayt, which include the Twelvers and the Ismailis. It can also include Zaidis, who believe the imamate is exclusive to the progenies of Imam Ali, Hassan and Hussein. "Sunni" today is used to describe those who believe Abu Bakr was a legitimate caliph who was chosen by the general Muslim population based on Shura.

This theoretical and historical disaccord would not have grown so much as to separate between Muslims had it not been for the existence of a favourable environment for it to grow in such as a lot of ignorance, prejudice, greed, tyranny, social disintegration, immorality, lack of democracy and lack of constitutional institutions that arrange for a peace process and control the problem before it gets out of hand. The big fitnah that took place during the first generation of Muslims, the generation of the great sahaba, presents a clear proof about the existence of such an environment that helps the conflict grow. And this happened before the birth of Islamic sects, Sunna and Shia. Had there been a clear constitution that arranges for power exchange and puts forwards legitimate channels for opposition, the protest against Uthman's political views would not have turned into a turmoil (fitnah) which led to the killing the great companion and caused continuous wars among the greatest companions (may God be pleased with them). Also the sectarian conflict that this fitnah had caused would not have continued for so long, it also wouldn't re start every now and then or lead to the shed of blood during bad and painful turmoils.

Lastly, the Shiite/Sunni conflict might have had some meaning when it was born. Today the general Muslim population on both sides do not perceive any meaning for it, it's time that we buried this conflict and moved on.

The truth is today there is no one intact or official copy of either sect (Sunni and Shia). The two sects are open for people's different opinions and no one is obliged to adopt all the beliefs and opinions that were written by the proceeding men in different domains, such as ideology, jurisprudence and history. A person is free to pick and choose what he/she feels makes sense to him/her (ijtihad) and can make his own copy of beliefs that might not be the exact same copy of someone else's copy of the same sect. This is because a Muslim is only obliged to believe and follow the Islamic doctrine that's mentioned in the Holy Koran. Anything

other than that can be questioned, can be personal and differed on. Therefore we should not form a general picture of either sect and make the individuals of either sect representatives of that picture. We should, however, get to know everyone's opinions and beliefs at a personal level especially that societies develop and change overtime and do not sit still. In any case, there are basic rules in religion that people should not differ on. There are also ijthadat that are built on questionable evidences that should not cause a conflict within the Umma, it should be, though, open for debate and discussion. The conflict between Shia and Sunni is not based on the fundamentals of Islam but rather on minor issues that are based on proof that are not so clear.

Forming a picture of the other person, be it a Sunni or a Shiite, sometimes takes place in the midst of political conflicts and personal bitterness towards the others. This leads us to look at the negatives in others in order to disgrace them, stir up trouble against them and to provoke and start a military action against them to get rid of them.

Such conditions make it next to impossible to weigh the negatives and the positives and figuring out the big (religious) deviations from the small false not so significant ones (ijthadat) that can be tolerated. In these conditions, a small negative point is usually blown out of proportion and thus becomes one of the fundamentals of religion and hence justifies fighting and killing the person who holds that different belief.

If the reader of this book is living such political conditions at this time, it's better for him/her to close the book and put it aside until he's/she's calmed down and is more ready to know right from wrong. To make this a bit more understood, I'll give an example about a husband and wife who are fighting and arguing and insisting on a divorce. Each one of them is trying to remember the negative qualities of the other person so he/she can present it to the judge trying to get a decision in his/her favour. At this time, it won't do any good reminding them of the good qualities of the other person. Unless they both have made an earlier decision about staying together as a married couple despite all the problems they'll face in their marriage, and unless they're both in a calm state, only then they can see the problem as it is without blowing it out of proportion. Only then they'll remember the positives and the negatives so they can deal with it in a gentle loving manner.

The important thing is wanting to coexist, after that things get easier. Just like it's wrong to leave the negatives in a marriage grow and build up because then it might explode and destroy the marriage, it is also wrong to leave the negatives among different sects untreated because it will work against unity and coexistence. We shouldn't bury our heads in the sand, we should, on the other hand, try and deal with the problem lovingly and not magnify it or fight it through the media. The first step to solving a problem is to recognize and understand it. Therefore, we must study this sectarian problem calmly and objectively. To do so we must first analyze the problem and differentiate between the essential elements and the collateral ones, the outdated ones and the present ones, the fundamental ones and the subordinate ones, the relevant ones and the irrelevant, the real ones and the made up exaggerated ones. The idea of writing this book

was proposed by the respected Sheikh Mohamad Al Mukhtar Al Shankeeti who found the separation of Muslims painful. A year ago, he invited me to co-write a book with him that studies the common points between the two large Islamic sects (Shia and Sunna) and also the different points. The title of the book, which he also helped choose it, points to the fact that they agree on the fundamentals of the religion, and differ in history and politics. I started off writing my point of view in June, 2005 and waited a whole year for brother Al Shankeeti to write his views so the book would include both of our views together. But I haven't heard from brother Al Shankeeti so I decided to publish my part of it while still waiting for him to write his part of it. Meanwhile I referred back to the documents from the conference that was held in Istanbul on 13th to the 15th of September 1993 that was titled (Shiism throughout history and in our present day) that was under the supervision of the Islamic Studies Trust in Turkey, headed by Dr. Ali Ozak. A number of Turkish university professors and Sunni and Shia scholars attended the conference. I also had the honour to be a part of it. I learned a lot from the Sunni scholars' comments and criticism of different sides of Shiite way of thinking. I also learned from the answers that were offered by the Shiite scholars. Of course, I kept my own criticism of both sides to myself which I present in this book. I invite everyone who reads the book to study the points I present and give me their remarks so that we can strengthen the Islamic unity and move forward with the Islamic Umma.

I ask God that I succeed in this.

Ahmad Al KATIB

London, June 2006

God the Almighty specifies the basis of the Islamic ideology at the beginning of the Holy Koran, beginning of surat al Bakara.....These holy verses include the basis of the Islamic ideology: belief in one God, prophet hood and the hereafter. Muslims from different denominations do not differ on this. Although this is enough to reinforce the basis of unity between all Muslims, it's not, as Muslims differ on the details of the subjects of unification or hereafter. For example, whether God has a body, resurrection of the body or the soul, and the meaning of God's oneness (توحيد الله) and how to worship him, all this caused over the years a debate not only between Shia and Sunni, but among different Islamic denominations in general. Especially among Ahl Al Hadith (the early Sunnis) and the Muttazala and the Asharis who later on became the backbone of Ahl Al Sunna, and the Shia agreed with them on a lot of points. The Salafi or the Wahabi interpretation of the oneness of God, (توحيد الله) which emphasizes the unification of worshiping God (i.e. worshiping God exclusively) instead of stricting it to the unification of Deism, probably causes today the biggest disagreement among Muslims. Based on this interpretation, some Wahabis consider the general Muslim population, Sunnis and Shia who disagree with them on the emphasis of the unification of worshiping God only, or interpreting it a certain way and

instead strict themselves to the belief of the unification of Deism, or declaring the unity of God in a general sense, they consider such Muslims as polytheists and ignorant unbelievers. Some current Islamic leaders (such as the Egyptian thinker Ikhwan Sayyid Kotob) walked in the footsteps of the Salafis (Wahabis). These leaders considered Islamic societies ignorant polytheist societies because they don't enforce the act of worshiping God exclusively as a law but instead follow and befriend "infidel" leaders who don't follow God's orders. Taking aside the fact that the Khawarij considered Imam Ali out of the folds of Islam because he made truce with Muawiyah, just like they considered those who committed one of the bigger sins as kafirs, we see that the first serious ideological disagreement among the Muslim Umma was about issues such as destiny, free will and devolution and whether man is free willed or destined. It's well known that this disagreement occurred among Muslims before they crystallized into different sects. Then a more serious disagreement occurred which led to the birth of "Ahl Al Sunna" troupe led by Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal. This controversy was carried on with Imam Abu Hanifa, who believed in the legitimacy of one's opinion to confront the large number of weak hadiths relaying to the prophet (pbuh). Based on this Imam Ahmad believed in the non creation of the Koran, whereas Imam Abu Hanifa and the Muttazalla believed the Koran was created. This fierce controversy led Imam Ahmad to consider those who say the Koran is created as kafirs and considered them innovators (أهل البدعة). He insisted that the belief that the Koran is created is an innovation and goes against "sunna" ie the way of the prophet. He even considered those who had no opinion about it as innovators. He said: (Whoever says reading the words in the Koran (is created), and whoever has no opinion about it and said "I don't know whether it's created or not created, but it is God's word", such a person is an innovator just like whoever says "It's created", it is the word of God therefore it's not created). Hassan Bin Ayoub asked Ahmad Bin Hanbal: What do you say about the Koran? He said: God's words are not created. He asked: What do you say about one who says it's created? He said: He's a kafir. He asked: What makes him a Kafir? He said: According to God's versesthe Koran is God's knowledge so whoever says that God's knowledge is created is a kafir.

There are other narrations narrated by Ahmad Bin Hanbal's students that stated that he used to consider anyone who believed the Koran is created as a kafir, also whoever had no opinion about it. Abu Bakr (Al Khallal) said: ...Abu Abdullah said: The Koran is from God's knowledge, doesn't He say (He taught the Koran) and the Koran has God Almighty's names. We do not suspect God's names to be non created, we do not suspect that God's knowledge is non created, therefore the Koran is from God's knowledge and it has God's names. Hence, we do not suspect that it's non created and it is the word of God Almighty and God still speaks it. Then he said: And what infidelity is worse than this infidelity? And what infidelity is more evil than this? If they claimed the Koran is created, then they're claiming that God's names are created and that God's knowledge is also created, but people make light of this issue and say that the Koran is created and they think this is an easy lenient issue, yet they don't know

that they're committing infidelity by saying so. And I hate to say this to everyone, but they ask and I hate speaking about this subject. So it came to my attention that they're claiming that I'm withholding information. So I said: Whoever says the Koran is created and doesn't say that God's names are created and neither is his knowledge and didn't add anything to this, I say he/she is a kafir? He said: that's how it is according to us.

Abu Bakr Al Khallal also said: Hanbal Bin Isaac Bin Hanbal told me, through someone, that he heard Abu Abdullah say: Al Jahamiyah is divided into 3 groups: One group says that the Koran is created, a second group says that the Koran is God's actual words and stops at this, and a third group says that our words as we speak them while reading the Koran are created, all three groups are the same to me.

Also it's been reported that he said: Whoever claims that the Koran is created is a Jahami infidel. And whoever claims that the Koran is God's word but didn't state whether it's created or non created, he's then worse than the first person. And whoever claims that our words as we read the Koran are created and that the Koran is God's word, he's then a Jahami, and whoever doesn't consider all of these people (mentioned above) Kafirs then he's a Kafir just like them.

Although the Asharites gave up a lot of their Ashari beliefs in favour of Ahl Al Hadith, the "real Sunnis" i.e. the Hanbalis still considered them innovators and unhappily considered them Sunnis as opposed to Shia.

2: Difference in Ideology (The Imamate Doctrine) In those early days when the different doctrines originated, the imamate or caliphate issue was not considered a fundamental Islamic belief since the Holy Koran did not speak about it in details. However, a group of Shia that was known as Imamiah or Rafidah in the second Hijra century, initiated the claim that the prophet has chosen Imam Ali as his caliph, and that the right to the caliphate was exclusive to the Alawi Husseinii progeny. They backed up this claim using certain interpretations of some Koranic verses and some weak and general hadiths. All that raised the imamate issue to a doctrine level and made it a supplement and a continuation to prophet hood. This pushed the Sunni mind to give preference to the Rashidun Caliphate and made their preference sequential, and also made it a part of their doctrine, although the Sunnis confess to the unavailability of a Godly text regarding the caliphate and believe that it's left up to Muslims to choose their caliph.

At the International Shiite Conference which took place in 1993 in Istanbul, Dr Ali Ozak presented the common points between Sunnis and Shiites in his presentation which was entitled "Imamate Shiite Opinion on (Koranic) Interpretation". The common points are:

1. Oneness of God: There is no difference in this ideology between Sunnis and Shiites, only Shiites are closer to the Mutazzala when it comes to issues such as seeing God in the hereafter and whether he has a body, destiny and free will...also in hadith issues.
2. Prophet hood: Shiites also believe in Mohamad's (pbuh) prophet hood.
3. Ma'ad: ie the belief in the hereafter, resurrection, judgment day, heaven, hell and the likes. No big differences about these issues. Then he

carried on: "As for the issue that Shiites differ with the Sunnis on is the imamate issue. Indeed, this is the keynote that both parties differ on since the the imamate system is the basis of Shiism.

The Twelver Imamate Shiites build their whole doctrine on the principles of prophet hood and imamah. An Imam to them- ie to the early Shiites specifically- can create and pass law just like a prophet. Also the imam receives revelation just like the prophet and solves problems using information that was revealed to him as a guideline. The imams are responsible for administrative, political, educational, economical, and sociological issues pertaining to people. Hence, an imam can pass judgment, can pass religious verdicts and interpret Koranic verses to make it fit and agree with their beliefs. Based on this, people have to absolutely follow him although he reserves the right to dissimulate his true beliefs (al takiyah) depending on the circumstances and (his) interests".

Then he added " Shiism is a political trend more than it is a religious ideology, however, this political trend turned into a religious doctrine with time. Hence, it is a prerequisite for whoever wants to join Shiism for him/her to believe that the caliphate is the absolute exclusive right of Ali's progeny. In reality, this belief that is no more than a political trend (considering it a religious ideology) is one that is in contradiction with the teachings of the Koran and the Sunna at the same time. This belief is also considered one of the deciding factors on whether a person is a Muslim or not (ie he has to adopt this belief to become a Muslim) and this is in accordance with early Shiite sources. Although Ayatoallah Makarem Shirazi-during our meeting with him in September , 1991 in the city of Qom- mentioned that the imamate ideology is not a prerequisite of Islam but a rerequisite of Shiism, he offered reasonable and acceptable clarifications on this.

The imamate doctrine means that the president of a country must be infallible just like a prophet. He would also receive revelations from God just like prophets. Imams also posses the same qualities as prophets and have the right and the validity to act like them (according to their claim) and as a result of this doctrine which pertains to the Imam and the president of a country, Shia believe that the Imam has a supernatural personality. They also believe that every act an Imam does is correct and acceptable and people must endorse his orders and avoid what he forbids. This is in agreement with the commandments of Islam and what it forbids its followers from doing. By nature, this doctrine causes a conflict with the rest of Muslims since they believe that Mohamad (pbuh) is the seal of prophets and messengers like the Koranic verse # 30, surat Ahzab says "....". Muslims also believe that divine revelation has also been ended with Mohamad (pbuh). They also believe that there is no one who is infallible on earth after Mohamad (pbuh).

This is the reason that people from the two opposing opinions (Shia and Sunni) have fought fiercely against each other over the years.

Therefore we must -firstly before anything else- induct some flexibility into the two opposing opinions so we can improve their relations with each other. We believe that the most important issue that differentiates Shia from the rest of the Islamic denominations is the imamate issue".

Dr. Ozak also said: "A fact that the public (ie Muslim Umma) is aware of is that the divine message has ended with Mohamad (pbuh), just like divine revelation has also ended. Hence, people will follow three things till judgment day and these things are the Koran, the noble Sunna and an intact reasoning. Therefore if we believed what the Shia claim regarding the imamah wouldn't we be going against the teachings of the Koran and the implementation of the prophet's (pbuh) sunna? Also if we said, like the Shia claim, that the messenger of God wanted to choose a caliph after him but couldn't because people around him stopped him from doing so. This saying is fallacious and also suggests that the messenger of God kept some facts to himself in fear of some people. This imperfects prophet hood although the prophet is infallible and cannot at all keep some religious facts secret because of others who oppose him. If he did, he would be unable to deliver his divine message, and this is implausible.

Dr. Mahdi Al Hussein Al Rouhani answered Dr. Ozak regarding his sentence "The Imam to Shia can create and pass law just like the prophet and he also receives divine revelation like the prophet" and said "This accusation is not true, there are a lot of Shia hadiths about their imams (pbuh) confessing that everything they (imams) say is taken from the messenger's (pbuh) sayings (hadiths). For example, Al Baker says : Oh Jaber, if we were to speak to you (ie teach you Islam) as we wish and please we would have been doomed (by God). But our hadiths come from the messenger's (pbuh) hadiths as we have collected them like others collect gold and silver. And in another narration narrated by Mohamad Bin Shareeh from Al Sadik "By God we do not narrate (hadiths) as we please and do not present our opinion in our hadiths. We only say what God has said". And there are a lot of Shiite narrations regarding this and any narration from the Ahl Al Bayt Imams that opposes it is a lie. It is strange that Dr. Ozak accuses Shiites of giving their imams the right to create and pass law when it is Ahl Al Sunna who have done so with their Sahaba and made a Sunna for the sahaba just like that of the prophet. Refer to "A'lam Al Muwake'en" sentence 4 page 120 where there is more than 40 hadiths regarding this. One hadith regarding this issue is "Follow my Sunna and the Sunna of the guided Rashidun caliphs. Hold on tight to both (my sunna and theirs). He said "he compared his sunna to that of the caliphs' (the caliphs' sunna is different than the sunna of the prophet) otherwise it would be the sunna of the prophet". Dr. Ali Ozak commented on Al Rouhani's answer by saying:

" The truth is that when I refer to things that have been mentioned about Shia in the early days, I refer to it as opinions that some people had in the past. My goal now is to reach a middle way where Ahl Al Sunna and the Shia can meet because all people are held responsible before God about their beliefs and those people from the past are not responsible for us and we're not responsible for them. Therefore, we must unite on the fundamentals of religion. All I have mentioned is found in the Shia's and Ahl Al Sunna 's books and interpretations. They're gone now (early Shia and Sunnis) and we're here. We're here in this meeting to study these opinions and accept the ones that are proper and reject the ones that we disagree with so we can reach the truth which is Islam, Islam that relies on

the God's Holy book (Koran) and his messenger's (pbuh) proper sunna".

Study # 3: Ghulu and Ghulat (Those who exaggerate)

Muslims who believed in Godly chosen Imams don't seem too bad when compared to the ghulats (those who exaggerate about the whole Imamate issue), who became active towards the end of the first Hijra century. They thrust themselves in the Shia ranks and started disseminating their deviated ideologies, which they conveyed from previous religions and cultures like Christianity, Judaism, Parsee and Hermetica, in Ahl Al Bayt's name. Their exaggeration revolved around raising the Ahl Al Bayt Imams from normal humans to the level of prophets and even God. Some of the ghulat refused the belief that Mohamad (pbuh) was the last prophet and believed in the necessity of the continuation of divine revelation till Judgment Day. Some believe that the Imams are the reincarnations of God and they do God's job in this life and in the hereafter such as sustenance, creation, death, day of reckoning and the likes. This belief raises them to the level of God.

Some of those ghulats were:

1. Abdullah Bin Saba': He was the first one to start ghulu (exaggeration) during the life of Imam Ali. He said: A divine fragment took over Ali's body and united with it and through it he knows the unseen, he came on the clouds, thunder is his voice and lightning is his smile. This divine fragment gets reincarnated in one Imam after the other.
2. There's a debate about whether this person actually existed or not and about how big a role he played during the big fitnah and the revolution against Uthman and whether this personality is real or a legend. We can suppose that it's an exaggeration to ascribe all the political moves and wars, that involved the greatest sahaba and the settlers of Al Madina, Egypt and Iraq, to one Jewish man. But we cannot ignore the phenomena of extremism and exaggeration that spread in Kufa among the Saba'is, who are a group of Yemeni Shiitte tribe who settled in Kufa. We also cannot deny the fact that the Shiite and Ahl Al Bayt Imams used to complain about Abdulla Bin Saba' and the Saba'is.
3. Bayan Bin Sam'an Al Nahdi, during the time of Imam Ali Bin Hussein.
4. Almaghera Bin Sa'ed, during the time of Imam Al Baker.
5. Hamza Bin Ammara Al Barbari.
6. Al Hareth Al Shami.
7. Abdullah Bin Al Hareth.
8. Abu Al Khattab Mohamad Bin Abi Zaynab Al Asadi who said : Jaffar Al Sadik is th God of his time. Al Shahrastani said: Al Sadik exaggerated when he disowned Abi Al Khattab and cursed him.

The names of the above ghulats arose in one of Imam Jafar Bin Mohamad Al Sadik's hadith where he cursed them ; "Shall I inform you (O People), on whom it is that the satans descend? They descend on every lying wicked person.", then he said: They're seven: Al Maghera, Bayan, Sa'ed, hamza Bin Amara Al Barbari, Al Hareth Al Shami, Abdullah Bin Al Hareth and Abu Al Khattab". Based on what these ghulats and others preached, a number of sects were formed such as : Al Bayaniah, Al Khattabiah, Al Sha'riah, Al

Magheriah, Al Ba'iyah, Al Gharabiyah, Al Alia'iah, Al Mukhamasa, Al Bazi'iyah, Al Mansouriah, Al Mofawweda. Al Mufawweda were the ones who claimed that God created the Imams and then he resigned and left it up to them to create the world and run it.

The Holy Koran speaks about prophets' miracles such as the turning of prophet Moses's (pbuh) stick into a crawling snake, prophet Jesus (pbuh) raising the dead and curing the blind and the leper, softening of a piece of iron for prophet David (pbuh), prophet Solomon (Sulayman) (pbuh) having the wind under his command, bringing dead birds to life by calling on to them by prophet Abraham (pbuh). In the Holy Koran, Surat Al Imran, 49 prophet Jesus (pbuh) says: "I have brought you a Sign from your Lord. I will create the shape of a bird out of clay for you then breathe into it and it will be a bird by Allah's permission. I will heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead to life, by Allah's permission. I will tell you what you eat and what you store up in your homes. There is a Sign for you in that if you are believers". The ghulat interpreted such Koranic verses to mean that God has given the prophets the authority to control all of the creatures and administrate their surrounding. Therefore He has granted them what they called "Al Wilayah Al Takweeniah" (ie Creation Management) because the Koran speaks about such miracles as the doings of the prophets with the permission of God "No messenger could come up with a Sign (miracle) without Allah's permission". So whoever comes up with a Sign or a miracle or performs a supernatural action is a prophet as the Koran shows but it happens with God's permission. This, according to them, points to the notion of "Al Wilayah Al Takweeniah".

From this point they went on trying to establish the "Wilayah Al Takweeniah" theory regarding Ahl Al Bayt. To prove their point, they used analogy by comparing the Imams to the previous prophets' disciples and the the good men who were around the prophets. For example the friend of the Ifrit Jinn (large, powerful Genie), or the friend of prophet Sulayman (pbuh) as in the following verses : "he said (to his own men) Ye Chiefs! Which of you can bring me her throne before they come to me in submission? A stalwart of Jinn said: I will bring it to thee before thou rise from thy council: indeed I have full strength for the purpose, and may be trusted. Said one who had knowledge of the Book: I will bring it to thee before ever they glance returns to thee.". Surat Al Namel, verses 38-40. They also said: Since Sulayman's disciple (Asif Bin Berkhaya) and the Ifrit Jinn were able to freely operate the universe, then the prophet's disciples (pbuh) ,who are the Imams of Ahl Al Bayt, are able to come up with miracles and also operate the universe. Therefore God has given them "Wilayah Al Takweeniah". The ghulats also claimed that some Imams performed a number of miracles, also they claimed that the Imams have knowledge of the unseen. They said" Sulayman's disciple, Asif Bin Berkhaya, had knowledge of the Book (Said one who had knowledge of the Book'. Imam Ali and the rest of the Imams have the knowledge of the entire Book. They made this claim based on their taweel (interpretation) of the following verse of the Holy Koran:" And say God is a sufficient witness between me and you and he who has the knowledge of the Book". Based on mutawatera narrations (a number of narrations narrated from different

people to mean the same thing hence reliable) narrated by people of the same sect and people from different sects, they claim that the previous verse was revealed about Ali and his progeny. One of the ghulats says "There's no analogy (comparison) between the knowledge of Asif Bin Berkhaya and the knowledge of our mawla amir al mumineen (pbuh) except for the analogy of a mosquito that drinks water from the sea, according to Imam Al Sadik (pbuh) analogy when he was asked about the similarity of the two knowledges".(1) Then they claimed that "Ahl Al Bayt have the knowledge of the Book and the knowledge of all the prophets and messengers, this is in accordance with a number of mutawatera (reliable) narrations on the interpretation of Koranic verses that spoke about the Imams (pbuh)". The ghulat based their previous claim on their first claim which states that the imams of Ahl Al Bayt are the disciples of the prophet (pbuh) and that they're chosen by him to lead the Islamic Umma till the Day of Judgment. They considered the claimed "miracles" as proofs of their honesty and signs of their Imamate despite the fact that no evidence has been brought up to prove that any of the Imams actually performed a miracle or spoke of the unseen. The ghulat, however, made up stories, narrations and hadiths and ascribed them to Ahl Al Bayt and they believed such narrations and considered them mutawatera ones that cannot be discussed.

When the Imams of Ahl Al Bayt denied the ghulats claims pertaining to their knowledge of the unseen or the divine revelation or performing miracles and being supernatural humans, the ghulat would claim the the Imams are using taqiyah, therefore they would change the Imams sayings by 180 degrees and claim that the Imams tell them (the ghulat) in secret what they cannot come out an say in public.

Maybe the best of examples is the story of Abu Al Khattab Al Asadi when Imam Al Sadik cursed him because he (Al Khattab) claimed divine attributes to Imam Al Sadik. When Abu Al Khattab learned about the cursing, he explained that the imam meant another man who lived in Al Basra who was also named Abu Al Khattab. Imam Al Sadik cursed Al Khattab again and this time he named him specifically. Despite this, Abu Al Khattab who lived in Al Kufa didn't give up but justified the cursing by saying that "Imam Al Sadik cursed him publicly to save the ship from sinking just like prophet Musa's friend who breached the ship in order to save it from the usurper king" just like in Surat al Kahf, verse 79: "As for the boat, it belonged to a certain men in dire want. I but wished to render it unserviceable, for there was after them a certain king who seized on every boat by force".(3)

While some ghulat, who claimed that the Imams were gods or prophets, went out of the folds of Islam, they (Al Mufawweda) kept on clinging to the Shia trying to pass on their deviated beliefs to the ranks of Imamate Shiism. If the Shia in a general sense have refused the ghulat's extremist claims, some of their beliefs such as the continued divine revelation to the Imams in one way or the other, the claim that they have knowledge of the unseen and performing miracles as a sign of divine Imamate and as a duty, have been passed on to the Imamate thought. Some ghulat doubted the ending of prophet hood (after prophet Mohamad (pbuh)) and believed

in the necessity of the existence of a Godly scholar who teaches the Book (Koran) and gives answers to people regarding new matters, not through ijtihad and narrations of prophetic hadiths, but through factious knowledge from God. Of course, this belief isn't adopted by all Imamate Shia but only some. It has some ghulu in it to a degree since it considers the imams are like prophets who receive divine revelation, that they have the knowledge of the unseen and that imams a bigger role than simply the exoteric political caliphate and therefore preferred them to a lot of the prophets and messengers except for prophet Mohamad (pbuh).

Maybe the mixing between the Imamate thought and the ghulat thought is what made and still makes a lot of writers consider all Shiite groups ghulat, even the Imamate. Although the Imamate Shiites consider the ghulat out of the folds of Islam, disown them and curse them because the ghulat mixed in with the Imamate Shiites and because of raising the Imams to high levels above the original political role from which theology took off, and it is the legitimate and enforced political role that Muslims need everywhere and all the time.

Ahl Al Bayt Imams' Attitudes towards the Ghulat: Since the ghulat with their all different categories posed a danger on the Shiite move, Ahl Al Bayt imams took a rigid standing against them. Imam Jafar Al Sadik said "We're no more than servants to Him who chose us and made up caliphs, by God we have no proof from Him, we have no (license of) innocence from Him. We are to die, to be resurrected and to be judged. Whoever likes the ghulat then he hates us and whoever hates them then he loves us. The ghulat are infidels and the Mufawweda are polytheists. May God curse the ghulat, be it Christians, Kadaris, Marje'a or Haruriyah". (4). He also said: "May God curse him who attribute to us what we do not attribute to ourselves. May God curse him who says we're not God's servants, Him who created us, and to Him is our return and in His hand our forelocks." (5). Also said : "May God curse Abdullah Bin Saba'. He claimed that ameer al mumineen (pbuh) is God. By God, amir al mumineen (pbuh) was an obedient servant to God. Condemned are those who lie about us. Some people say about us what we do not say about ourselves, we declare our innocence of them, we declare our innocence of them". (6)

One of his friends, named Sadeer, said: "Some folks claim that you're gods referring to the Koranic verse (And He is God in the heavens and God on earth)? then the imam (pbuh) said: "Oh Sadeer, my hearing, my sight, my skin , my flesh and blood and hair are innocent of them. God is innocent of their claims. They do not follow my religion or my fathers' religion. And God will only join me with them on Judgment Day when He will be discontented with them". (7) Imam Sadik used to warn Shia against the ghulat saying: "Be aware that the ghulat could corrupt your youth. The ghulat are wicked creatures who belittle God's greatness and claim divinity to God's servants. By God, the ghulat are more wicked than the Jews, the Christians, the Parsees and the polytheists". When Abu Al Khattab got killed, Imam Al Sadik said: "May God curse Abu Al Khattab, those who got killed with him, those who haven't been killed and those who feel mercy towards them".

Al Kashky narrated that Al Sadik (pbuh) said to one of his friends: "Tell the ghulat to repent to God, they're lewd, kafirs and polytheists".

A man asked Imam Al Rida (pbuh): What do you say about tafweed (delegation)? He said: God Almighty delegated his religion (Islam) to the prophet. then he said: Take what the messenger has brought you and leave what he forbade. As for (delegating) creation and sustenance then no, then he continued: God Almighty says "God is the creator of everything" and "It is Allah who has created you, further He has provided for your sustenance, then He will cause you to die and again He will give you life. Are there any of your (false) partners who can do any single one of these things? Glory to Him! And High is He above the partners they attribute to Him."

Abu Hisham Al Jafari narrates: "I asked Abu Al Hassan Al Rida about the ghulat and the mofawweda. He said: the ghulat and the mufawweda are polytheists. Whoever sits with them or mingles with them or eats with them or drinks with them or kept in touch with them or intermarried with them or trusted them entrusted them with something or believed their conversations or helped them even with a word, whoever does any of that is out of God's, the prophet's and us Ahl Al Bayt's wilayah".

He also said in a different hadith: "The imam is begotten and also begets, gets sick and gets better, eats and drinks, uses the washroom, marries and sleeps, forgets (wayas hoo?), becomes happy and becomes sad, laughs and cries, lives and dies, gets buried and gets visited, gets resurrected, gets judged, gets forgiven and credited and gets to intercede (with God)". Al Khashki narrated that Imam Al Rida (pbuh) said "Binan used to lie on behalf of Ali Bin Hussein (pbuh) so God gave him a taste of iron heat. Al Maghera Bin Saeed used to lie on behalf of Abu Jafar (pbuh) so God gave him a taste of iron heat". Al Majlesi made a chapter of his book (Bihar Al Anwar) titled (Denying ghulu regarding the prophet and the imams (pbut) and showing the meanings of Tafweed and what should not be attributed to them and what shouldn't be). He presented in it ninety four narrations about them (pbut) denying the ghulu and twenty four narrations about tafweed (delegation), he also presented some Shiite sheiks about this. The Position of Shia on Ghulat:

Sheikh Al Sadouk (381H-?) said: "We believe that the ghulat and "Al Mufawweda" are kafirs and they're more sinful than the Jews, Christians, Parsee, Kadaris and Al Haruriah and the rest of innovators. No one degraded and belittled God the Almighty as they did. God Almighty said: "It is not (possible) that a man, to whom is given the Book and wisdom and the Prophetic Office, should say to people : "Be ye my worshipers rather than Allah's". On the contrary (he would say): "Be ye worshipers of Him (who is truly the Cherisher of all) for you have taught the Book and ye have studied it earnestly. Nor would he instruct you to take angels and prophets for Lords and Patrons. What! Would he bid you to unbelief after ye have bowed your will (to Allah in Islam.)", Al Omran, 79-80. The Almighty also said: "O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion, nor say of Allah but the truth", Al Nisa', 171. Someone asked Imam Al Rida (pbuh): Does the imam create and provide sustenance?...his spontaneous reaction was to ask God the Almighty for

forgiveness from such sayings: "Oh God I hold myself innocent before you of the might and power and there is no might and power save in you. Oh God, I seek refuge with you and I hold myself innocent before you of those who claimed that we possess what we have no right possessing. Oh God, I declare my innocence of those who said about us what we haven't said about ourselves. Oh God, you create, from you is sustenance, you we worship and from you we seek help. Oh God, you are our Creator and our forefathers' and fathers' Creator. Oh God, Divinity only suits you and Deity only fits you. Curse the Christians for they have belittled your greatness and curse (?) for saying (?). Oh God we are your slaves and the sons of your slaves. We have no power over ourselves. Oh God, we're innocent of those who claim we're god, and of those who claim we create and provide sustenance. Just like Jesus the son of Mary is innocent of Christians (and their claims about him). Oh God, we did not ask them to make such claims so don't hold us accountable for what they say and forgive us for what they claim about us" Oh my Lord, leave not of the unbelievers a single one on earth! For, if You leave (any of) them, they will but mislead Your devotees, and they will breed none but wicked ungrateful ones." (8)

Sheikh Al Mufid said : "Ghulu is to exceed the limits and (thus) to lose the meaning (of the subject). God Almighty said : "O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion, nor say of Allah but the truth", Al Nisa', 171. The Almighty prohibited us from exaggerating the person of the Messiah and warned us from losing the meaning of his purpose and made what the Christians claimed about him an extremist view (ghulu). The ghulat who pretended to be Muslims are the ones who claimed divinity and prophet hood to Ameer al Mumineen (Ali, the believers' prince) and the imams from his progeny (pbuh) and gave them preference (to everyone else) in religion and in this life to an extreme which made them, the ghulat, misguided kafirs. Ameer al Mumineen (pbuh) sentenced them to death by burning, and the rest of the imams considered them kafirs who were out of the folds of Islam". He also clarified their extremist views in ascribing divine attributes to regular people by saying: "what shows clear exaggeration is when the ghulat claim that the imams are not caused but are infinite (existed forever) with no cause and are gods. They claimed that the imams can create and do things that normal humans (God's servants) are unable to do". He also said: "Al Mufawwada is a part of ghulat. What distinguishes them from the rest of the ghulat is their admittance to the fact that imams are caused and created and are not infinite, although they still claim that the imams can create and provide sustenance. They (Al Mufawwada) also claim that the imams were God's "special" creation and he delegated to them the creation of the universe with everything in it". (9).

Sheikh Al Mufid believed in the possibility of the existence of divine revelations to the imams and the possibility of the imams carrying through miracles as he says : "Reason allows the possibility of divine revelation to the imams, although they're not prophets. God the Almighty said: "So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Moses : "Suckle (my child), but when when you have fears about him, cast him into the river". She (Musa's mother) knew this (to place her son in the river) by revelation from God

and thus obeyed it. She was not a prophet or a messenger or even an imam, rather she was a good servant of God. Reason also doesn't oppose the possibility of God sending another prophet, after our prophet, to engross his message". However, Al Mufid rejects this possibility based on ijma' (consensus) of Muslims. He says : " This is not possible based on ijma' and based on our knowledge that this (sending another prophet after Mohamad (pbuh)) goes against the teachings of Islam. All of the Imammates (Shia) agree on this." (10)

It is for the above reason that Sheikh Al Mufid considered ascribing prophet hood and divinity to the imams as a ghulu, only people who pretend to be Muslims would say such a thing as we have seen earlier. He also answered the ghulat (extremists) who hold on to unauthentic weak hadiths ascribed to Ahl Al Bayt by saying : "What was narrated weakly regarding this issue, even if it was narrated by thousands of people, doesn't hold proof of?" (11). Although Sheikh Al Mufid denied that the imams have knowledge of the unseen (as a self attained knowledge), he still accepted the claim that God had taught them (showed them) the unseen, he said : "To say that the imams (pbuh) know the unseen is a munkar (evil doing) corruption because such an attribute is only worthy of the One who self attains knowledge, not someone who needs it to be taught to him. This only belongs to God the Almighty. The Imamate Shia agree with me on this, except for the extremists such as "Al Mufaweda" and the ghulat that belong to them". Some Imamate Shia narrated that a man asked imam Ali (pbuh): "Were you given the knowledge of the unseen?, he answered him : Oh you brother of a Kalb! it's not knowledge of the unseen, it is a knowledge that has been taught (to us)". This agrees with some Imammates who claim that the imams have knowledge of the unseen taught to them (by God), based on the incident of the messenger who was shown the future as was told by God the Almighty. This is how the Imammates explain the connection between the imams (or their deputies) with God the Almighty.

This, indeed, is one sort of ghulu that Imamate Shia believe in as a way to save the Imamate theory (from being rejected) since it doesn't make sense without such claims especially when speaking about the imams' knowledge (Mohamad Al Jawad, Ali Al Hadi and Al Mahdi) whose fathers died when they were still too young to gain knowledge from them.

Therefore the Imamate Shia find it urgent to believe that the imams gained all of their knowledge directly from God without a mediator or a teacher. Also if the imams had gained knowledge from someone, that person (teacher) would be more knowledgeable than them and therefore has more right to the imamate.

This shows that there are different levels and degrees of ghulu. It also differs from one person to another and from one group to another. At the time when the Imamate Shia were disowning the "Mufaweda" and the ghulat that gave the imams divine attributes, some of them (Imamate Shia) were on the same line as the ones who became extremists (ghulat). Thus over the years there can be seen a kind of inherency between the divine imamate theory and the ghulu. A sense of obscurity took over (the Imamate Shia's) position on the ending of prophet hood with prophet

Mohamad (pbuh) and the role of imams as an extension to prophet hood, or the necessity of the continuation of divine revelation till the Day of Judgment. The Imamate Shia didn't speak of this frankly since, if they did, it would take them out of the folds of Islam as it rejects an essential part of Islam (ie the discontinuation of prophet hood). They gave divine revelation a broader definition to include the divine revelation that came down to Musa's mother and used that to claim that it came down to the imams as well. They claimed that there was a difference between the revelation that was sent down to the prophets and that was sent down to the imams.

The prophets could see the angels (who carried the divine message) but the imams could only hear them without being able to see them.

If we proved the claim that the imams receive some kind of divine revelation, like that of Musa's mother's revelation, then we would be building a special connection between the imams and God. This would make them higher than regular people who gain their (Islamic) knowledge through narrations, studying or juristic deduction. To believe such a claim is in itself a ghulu (an exaggeration).

Every Shiite mujtahid, who gains his knowledge through juristic deductions, had a different view regarding the ghulat. Some mujtahids considered them ghulat while others considered them depreciators. Different mujtahids considered them at different levels of ghulu. Imamate Shia sheikhs (in the fourth and the fifth centuries) considered Al Mufawwada ghulat kafirs who are out of the folds of Islam. Recent Imamate Shiites, however, such as Al Wahid Al Kharasani accept Al Mufawwada beliefs very easily.

While Ibn Al Ghada'iri, who was one of the religious scholars in the fifth century, took a negative stand against Al Mufaddal Bin Omar Al Jahafi (one of Imam Al Sadik's friends) as he said : "A weak exaggerator and adds a lot of (untruths) to his narrations. Ghulata used his ghulu narrations a lot. His hadiths should not be written", others, such as Al Khu'i held positive view of him and accepted his narrations. The early Shia scholars in Qum considered those who didn't hold the belief that the prophet forgets, they considered them ghulat. Others considered such people as depreciators. Al Kashi said : "Al Hussein Bin Obeid Allah Al Qumi was forced to leave Qum at a time when ghulats were forced to leave Qum.". Ibn Al Ghada'iri narrated that Mohamad Bin Ali Al Seerfi, whose nickname was Abu Samina, entered Qum and his stay in Qum was made popular until Ahmad Bin Isa Al Ashari (may God have mercy on his soul) exiled him from it because of his ghulu. He was known for his exaggeration, no one paid him any attention or wrote down his narrations". Al Najashi translated Orma Al Qumi saying : "The Qumis mentioned him, whispered about him and accused him of ghulu until they sent someone to watch him and found him praying starting from the beginning of the night till dawn so they stopped (their accusations).".

----- 1. Al Majlisi, Bihar Al Anwar, sentence 26, page 160. 2. Al Taqiya, that shiites used to practice, caused a delima with the Sunnis who started to have a problem trusting Shiites. Sunnis even didn't believe Shiites who rejected ghulu and

ghulat beliefs thinking that Shiites denied their true beliefs publicly while held on to them in secret. Sunnis didn't realize that Shiites have actually left the practice of taqiya and denounced ghulat beliefs publicly as well as in secrecy. 3. Al Ashari Al Qumi, The sayings and the groups (Al Maqalat wal Firaq), page 55.

4. Al Majlisi, Bihar Al Anwar, Book # 3, pages 51-52, 1301 H. edition. 5. Al Majlisi, Bihar Al Anwar, Book # 3, page 297 sentence 25. Rijal Al Kashi (Kashi Men), pages 297 and 527.

6. Rijal Al Kashi (Al Kashi Men), pages 106, 170-174. 7. Al Kilini, Al Kafi Usool 1: 269.

8. Al Sudooq, Ideologies in Imamate Religion, page 74. 9. Al Mufid, Ideology Correction (Tas heeh al Itikad), page 131 Chapter: Ghulu and Tafweed.

10. Al Mufid, Awael Al Maqalat (First Sayings), pages 78-79. 11. Al Mufid, The Chosen Chapters (Al Fosool Al Mukhtara), page 249.

Recent Ghulu Phenomena:

With the ending of the imamate era, the imamate theory reached a dead end after the death of Imam Al Hassan Al Askari in the middle of the third Hijra century with no offspring, even with the supposition of the existence in secrecy of an absent son. During the occultation era, the impossibility of the absent imam (Al Mahdi) to play the role of imamate (ie caliphate and chairmanship) made the imamate theory take up a new form. It took up a form of exaggeration to cover up its failure on one hand, and to give the imam a practical role to fulfill during the time of occultation, on the other hand. This lead the ghulat (the "Mufaweda") to give him the role of administering the universe and protecting the earth and the likes.

The exaggerated thoughts spread in a new wave with the spread of the Akhbari movement in the last few decades before the Usooli school of thought confronted it and brought Shiism back to its moderate and balanced state. The Usooli school also denied much of the Akhbari's superstitious legends. In the nineteenth century, a new school known as Al Sheikhia emanated. It belonged to the Usooli school when it came to subordinate issues but based its ideology on the Akhbari school.

The Usooli school, that was originated in Najaf and Karbala in the nineteenth century, was able to defeat the Akhbari and Sheikhia schools and seclude them to a very small girdle. The Usooli school also witnessed some followers who claimed to belong to it but leaned more towards the Akhbari curriculum regarding their view of Ahl Al Bayt imams. Some religious men accepted weak inauthentic narrations without the perusal, critique or conformity of the authenticity of the narrators. Thus they fell in the ghulu turmoil and ascribed divine attributes to Ahl Al Bayt imams, or claimed high ranks for the imams and supernatural divine roles such as managing the universe, creation, providing sustenance and the likes. This gave support to the "Wilayah Al Takweeniyah" (Creation/Universe Management) theory that was started by the "Mufaweda".

Sheikh Mohamad Hussein Al Waheed Al Khurasani, a teacher (Science of Usool) in Qum, is one example of the recent sheikhs who is a ghulat (an exaggerator). He boldly says that God the Almighty has delegated

creation and providing sustenance and the likes to the imams and that the imams are mediators between God and his creatures' actions. He also claims that this delegation is true and does not contravene with the belief in God the Almighty. Al Khurasani says : "The imams are the ones who are in control of existence and existence comes from God. The imam of the time became a slave and when he became a slave that made him a God. The act of worship is a jewel, and divinity is its essence, whoever attains that jewel he/she becomes divine (uniting with God) and is not independent of Him." (1)

Another example of recent religious men who are ghulat is Al Sayyid Mohamad Al Shirazi. He believes that God has delegated enactment guardianship as well as universe management to the prophet and to the imams of Ahl Al Bayt. That means that they (the prophet and the imams) are in control of the world, they can do as they wish with it, from existence to nothingness just like Gabriel is responsible for death. Also the prophet and the imams are the intercessors for creating the world and the reason for its creation. They're the cause of God's kindness and generosity with the world and they're the reason for the continued existence of the universe.(2) Lately a new book titled "Torch of Guidance to Chairmanship and Caliphate"(3) was published and ascribed to Imam Al Khomeni. I have not been able to confirm it since the book was not heard of during Al Khomeni's life and was published more than twenty years after his death. The following has been mentioned in the book : "They (the imams) have a number of ranks such as : Rank (Our affair is difficult, no one can bear it except for an angel or a prophet or a servant (of God) whose heart has been tested for its faith in God). Rank (We have cases no angel, no prophet and no tested servant can bear). Rank (We have cases in which we are with God. In such cases we are Him and He is us, only He is He and we are we). This rank was pointed at by Al Nahiyah Al Mukadasa (The Sanctified Side) supplications in Rajab (And there's no difference between you and it except that they're your slaves....). Also it was mentioned in the noble Al Ziyara Al Jami'ah , comprehensive supplications read at the graves of the imams, (Judging humans is for you and their return is to you...). Also the saying of ameer Al mu'mineen (pbuh) : "I am the one who lets people (those who deserve heaven) enter heaven.." He is then the one who sends people to heaven and hell as mentioned in mutawatir hadiths". Also "From what we have taught you and brought you as proof, you can understand the saying of the master of the believers, the role model of the knowledgeable ones, and the prince of believers (pbuh) : I was with the prophets esoterically and with the messenger of God exoterically. He (Ali, pbuh) has the absolute exclusive mastership and since mastership is the concealed caliphate and the absolute exclusive mastership is the concealed thus wise caliphate then he (pbuh), based on his absolute mastership, stands upon every soul with all of its deeds and is a divine self subsisting sustainer shadow who is one with all things. A true divine self subsisting sustainer shadow." (4)

This agrees with what have been mentioned in "The Islamic Government" book where he says: "One of the fundamentals of our sect is that our

imams have a rank that no angel and no prophet can reach. Also based on our hadiths and narrations, the great prophet (pbuh) and the imams (pbut) were light before the creation of this world. God made them surround his throne and gave them ranks that only He knows how high they are. Gabriel said, as mentioned in Miraj narrations: "If I got as close as a part of a finger to it, it would burn". Also it was narrated that they (the imams, pbut) have said : "We have cases with God that no angel and no prophet can achieve".(5)

Also he says : "True unification of Deism cannot be completed without accepting the imams' (pbut) guardianship (and mastership)". Also : "(The lack of) the enforcement of the mastership and (the earthly) chairmanship of the imam does not take away from his high rank given to him by God , it also does not make him at the same level as the ruler who opposed him. The imam has a glorified rank and an exalted position and a "creation" caliphate that all the atoms of the universe subdue to it". (6)

In this book, Imam Khomeini also says : "Those who are following the (Islamic) Shariah (the imams), reject selfishness, deny themselves the act of being worshiped with all of its purity, and do not proceed to show their almightiness, sultanate and power. They, therefore, are in the highest rank of unity and sanctification and at the greatest degree of plurality. Plurality has never veiled unity for them nor unity veiled plurality because of their strong conduct, their souls' purity and their non coming forth as divine. Divinity is the absolute affair of God although matter is under the command of the wali (imam), he does whatever he pleases with it. The book was brought to them in this world from God the Almighty, which the prophet (pbuh) has spoke about it relaying : Addressing the people in heaven, the Ever Lasting Self Subsisting Sustainer who does not die addresses the Ever Lasting Self Subsisting Sustainer who does not die. If I order something to be , it becomes (what I order it) and I made you able to do the same. Then the prophet (pbuh) : Therefore, people in heaven will be able to order things to be what they want them to be. In this rank, prophets and the rightly guided walis (pbut) do not show their ability to perform miracles, the basis of which is divinity, almightiness, sultanate and mastership in the upper worlds and the lower ones. They only show their ability to perform miracles if there's a need to it and they also pray and ask God (for help) shamefacedly, indigently, showing servitude and rejecting selfishness. They delegate the issue (the one they're praying for) to God and ask for the manifestation of its cause and the origin of its competence (?) although they are divine (with the permission of the Almighty), yet they refuse to show their divinity...". (7)

There's another saying for him in "The book of Fourty Hadiths" : "There are hadiths regarding the substance of their bodies (the imams'), the creation of their souls and issues such as how they were granted knowledge of the unseen and knowledge of the prophets and the angels and other things that are too great to cross anyone's mind. Such hadiths that speak about their good ethics, have been conveyed to us in different recognized books , especially Usool Al Kafi book. These many hadiths dazzle the mind and no one but them (the imams) fully understand their actualities and

secrets." (8)

A book titled "The Imamate" that has been ascribed to Sheikh Murtada Al Mutahhari has the following extremist views, he says : "The imams are specialized in Islam (ie the science of Islam). This specialty and their knowledge in Islam was not launched from their own minds nor did it depend on their own thought since a knowledge and a specialty that are gained this way would not be free of error. The imams, instead, gained their Islamic knowledge from the prophet (pbuhp) in a secret way that we are unaware of. This knowledge passed from the prophet (pbuhp) to Ali (pbuh) and to the rest of the imams after him. There was an infallible Islamic knowledge that does not err, which passes on from one imam to the next." (9)

He also says : "There's a third level to the imamate (the first two being the political leadership and the scholarly one) and it is the concept of imamate. Shiite books are full of writings about this concept and this is common also in Sufism. The pure wali (imam), who has perfect human attributes, has qualities that are too deep for our minds to comprehend. One example of such qualities is his power over the hearts (people's hearts) since he is a wholly soul that surrounds all other souls." (10)

Then he adds : "In Shiism, wilayah means leadership but also much more than that. It also mean that the wali is the proof of his time which means that earth is never free of an imam or else earth would be annihilated with all of its creatures". Therefore earth was never and will never be free of the perfect human. Shia also believe that this perfect human has a lot of different qualities and degrees (of perfection). We (Shia), in most of our tahiyyat (sending regards) and ziyarat (supplications read at the graves of the imams) which we read, acknowledge such a wilayah and an imamate, ie we believe that the imam has an omnipresent soul. In the ziyarah that we all recite continuously, which is a part of the basis of Shiism, we say : "I bear witness that you can see me, can hear me and can answer my greetings". We speak to him when he's dead and we believe he always had this quality, dead and alive. This does not mean that he didn't have this Peace on you oh Ali Bin Musa Al Reda" then I bear witness to him and confess that he can hear me and answer my greetings". (11)

Al Mutahhari confirms this meaning of wilayah in the second chapter of his book "The Imamate and the Assignment of Manifesting the Religion after the Prophet", he says : "When we present the imamate in this silly manner and give it only the meaning of leadership, then we find that Ahl Al Sunna's theory (regarding the caliphate matter) is more attractive than the Shiite theory. We must not make such a mistake where we give the imamate the meaning of government and ruling only. Making such a mistake gives the imamate a simple naive meaning which leads, thematically and logically, to consequences that such a meaning leads to." (12)

He also says : "Today, this mistake keeps taking place. Every time the imamate is mentioned, one's mind thinks of ruling as a meaning to it. Truth is, governing is only one part of it and a very small part of the imamate duties. We should not mix between the two matters (between imamate and government). What is the imamate then? The imam is the

prophet's caliph in religious affairs. The most important issue in the imamate is the succession of the prophet in presenting the religion and signifying it without a divine revelation (ie without the coming down of divine revelation to the imam). With no doubt, divine revelation comes down only to the messenger of God and it ends with his death just like the message of Islam has ended as well".

Going back to the question : Is there a person, after the prophet, who presents a source of and a reference to religious affairs, just like the prophet was that source, reference and interpreter? Is there a perfect person with such attributes? In Nahj Al Balagha, imam Ali (pbuh) speaks of the prophet's friend Bahra' when he was a young lad and how he heard the sound of the devil during the coming down of divine revelation to the prophet. Then he said: Oh messenger of God, what is this sound? The prophet answered "It's the devil, he gave up on (people) worshiping him", you can hear what I hear and see what I see although you are not a prophet". (Nahj Al Balagha, sermon 192). We see similar words to these in a lot of other books. (13)

Although Al Mutahhari frankly denies the coming down of divine revelation to imam Ali and admits that imam Ali does not share prophet hood with the prophet, he still insists, one way or the other, that imama Ali can still hear and listen to what the prophet can hear and listen to (ie divine revelation). He says : "Imamate to Shia is a concept similar to prophet hood. There is a remarkable verse in the Koran that comes together with a number of other verses that speak about the imamate. This very verse is connected to ameer al mu'mineen Ali Bin Abi Talib. It's even connected to the imamate matter itself and has the same meaning we have presented earlier and will come back to refer to it again". (14)

"We mentioned earlier that the earlier Muslim theologians made a big mistake when they put forward the question of imamate as follows: What are the stipulations of the imamate? This format of the question assumes that Ahl Al Sunna's concept of the imamate is similar to our concept (ie Shia concept). We differ with them on the stipulations, we believe infallibility and divine text are two requirements that the imam must possess whereas Ahl Al Sunna do not hold such a belief. Truth is, the imamate that we, Shia, believe in is not what the Sunnis believe in at all. What Ahl Al Sunna mean by "imamate" is only the temporal part of it. Prophet hood can be used as an example since one of the duties of the prophet is to be a ruler for Muslims. This does not, however, mean that prophet hood means ruling and governing only. Prophet hood involves a lot more than leadership and ruling. As we mentioned earlier though, while the prophet is around, Muslims do not need another ruler since he is the ruler.

Ahl Al Sunna consider imamate as a government and the imam as a ruler who lives among the Muslim umma. He is a regular person who gets elected by the Muslim community. Given this definition of imamate, Ahl Al Sunna did not give the imamate more than the governing role. On the contrary, to Shia, the imamate comes right after prophet hood. It is even higher than some levels of prophet hood. Resolute prophets are the ones

who are imams as well as prophets. A lot of prophets were not imams, resolute prophets, however, reached the rank of imamate at the end of the journey". (15)

"A theologian would say : We do not ask who the ruler is while the prophet is still around. This is because the prophet has a side to him that is supernatural (his connection to the heavens and his knowledge of the unseen). Therefore, there is no sense in asking for another person to be a ruler while the imam exists. The person who speaks about a ruler has his own objective justifications in the case of the absence of the imam (and that's when assuming the non existence of the imam or when he is absent as it is so in the present time). We should be careful not to mix the imamate with the government. We cannot ask what the Sunnis position on it and what our position is based on this mix up. Imamate is a matter other than governing and to Shia it is a phenomena and a concept that resembles prophet hood in its highest degrees. In conclusion, our idea of the imamate is totally different than that Sunni idea. They do not believe in it the way we do. Therefore, it is not that they believe in it and differ with us on the stipulations of the imam. Imamate is a continuation to prophet hood and it is not lower in rank than prophet hood. It is similar to the prophet hood of the great prophets, those prophets also were imams and thus became prophets and imams. Imamate is incorporeal". (16)

What has ended after the messenger is the message and also prophet hood, no new person will come with a new message and a new religion after the prophet. There's only one religion and it is Islam and with the prophet of Islam, the message and prophet hood had come to an end. However, hujja (proof) and a perfect human (since the first human was perfect and therefore the last human should also be so) have not ended". (17) Although, the position of sheikh Al Mut-hari (on the imamate) does not represent the general Imamate Shia position (as can be seen from his complaints that Shia do not understand the imamate concept), he presents an example of the ghulat influence on the Imamate Shiism thought which raises the imamate above the political caliphate and makes it similar to prophet hood and sometimes even higher. This can also be seen in a book for Sayyid Mohamad Taqi Al Madrasi where he says : "A person who believes in divine revelation, which is a majestic power of God the Almighty and also a mercy to humans, such a person must believe in the imam the hujja (pbuh). God connected the earth with heaven through divine revelation. His mercy, kindness and generosity with humans would not leave us without a tie that connects earth with heaven after the death of the seal of the prophets and messengers Mohamad (pbuhp). Since the existence of man on earth until the coming of the great prophet (pbuhp), earth has never been without a divine proof (hujja). How would God the Majestic leave earth without a hujja? Were the earlier generations closer to God the Almighty that he sent to them a hundred and twenty four thousand prophets, not counting the disciples, and then leave us after the death of the prophet Mohamad (pbuhp) without a hujja? A person who believes in divine revelation must also believe in the continuation of this divine revelation to the imams (pbuh). Also this person must also believe that this continuation elevates and grows until it reaches its highest point

and until the Islamic message has reaches its climax and this is represented in the awaited hujja imam, may God fasten his return." (18) Ghulat and The Akhbari Curriculum:

As has been seen earlier, the new ghulat who believe in the delegation theory, rely on weak unreliable narrations that have been inserted in Ahl Al Bayt's heritage. For example, the Bayan Sermon which is ascribed to imam Ali (pbuh) and which Al Sayyid Kathem Al Rashti considered it authentic and widely spread. When, in reality, these narrations have no citation and their source is unknown. Even sheikh Al Majlisi, the author of "Bihar Al Anwar" (who collected all different types of narrations in his book) refused such narrations. He pointed out that this sermon is only found in ghulat books and their likes and said : "The many narrations that we collected in Bihar Al Anwar do not support such beliefs except for the performance of miracles although even that was not mentioned in reliable narrations that we know of. The narrations that supported such beliefs such as the Bayan sermon and its likes were only found in ghulat books". The author of "The Good Omen of Islam", Al Sayyid Mustafa Al Al Sayyid Haidar Al Khathemi said: "We have not found a reliable backing to this sermon called Al Bayan. It has not been proven by theologians like sheikh Al Toosi and Al Kulini and others. The fact that Al Majlisi has not mentioned it lessens its value since he's aware of different narrations. He might have not even come across it although it's not eloquent, gets repeated many times and its words are not clear". Al Sayyid Jafar Murtada Al Ameli also wrote on the website AlimamAli.net, which is managed and run by the Hawza in Qum, he wrote the following about the Bayan sermon : "They have came up with three different texts for this sermon. The three texts differ from one another a great deal and none of the three has a reliable citation. The content of the sermon gives more problems than the citation, no one line of the sermon can pass without any problems". Sayyid Al Ameli spoke also about the fallacious lies that were added to the sermon as well as its distortion for devilish reasons that cannot be denied. He also said : "What we have mentioned about the proceeds of some of the Bayan sermon were very small (???). Some ghulat, batinis, sufis and maybe jews might have had to do with this distortion to the sermon since they found this sermon a good place for them to spread their lies and misguidance". Sayyid Ali Al Hussein Al Sistani said : "It (the sermon) has not been proven to be the words of Ali (pbuh)". The fact that this sermon has not been mention in Nahj Al Balagha shows how weak it is and proves that it was most likely the making of the ghulat. As for its contents, it presents even more problems, every single line of it is disturbing. That's because of the bold phrases in it that show extremism and the delegation of creation to imam Ali (pbuh). These attributes that imam Ali (pbuh) used to describe himself are all attributes of God's actions, no servant of his shares any of it with him. And we also know that ameer al mu'mineen who is the master of theists would not claim such divinely attributes to himself. (19)

1) Al Waheed Al Kharasani, Devotional Extracts, Lecture : Shaban 13. 1411 in Qum, page 39.

2) Al Shirazi, Mohamad : From Al Zahra' Fiqh, page 10-11 and 17 sentence 1. From the book : The worlds of Science and its mustadrakat (?), Book of

Fatima sentence 1.

3) <http://www.al-kawthar.com/maktaba/moallef1.htm#imam>

4) Al Khomeni, Torch of Guidance to Caliphate and Mastership, page 84.

5) Al Khomeni, Islamic Government, page 52-53.

6) ibid, page 25

7) Al Khomeni, Torch of Guidance, page 53.

8) Al Khomeni, The Fourty Hadiths, page 489, hadith # 31, copy: Dar Al Kitab Al Islami Institute, Translated by Mohamad Al Gharwi

9) Al Mat-hari, The Imamate, page 47

10) ibid, page 52

11) ibid, page 52

12) ibid, pages 67-68

13) ibid, pages 69-72

14) ibid, page 186

15) ibid, page 187

16) ibid, page 213

17) ibid, page 233

18) Al Moderresi, Imama Al Mahdi: The role Model of the Truthful, page 9

19) Jafar Murtada Al Ameli, A Study in Signs of Emergence, Edition 1 Beirut, House of Eloquence 1992, pages 94-95. Mohamad Baker Al Majlesi, Minds' Mirror, Edition 2, House of Islamic Books 1363 H, sentence 3, pages 142-143. Mustafa Al Al Sayid Haidar Al Kathemi, Islam's Good Omen regarding the Signs of the Emergence of The Man of The Time, Beirut, islamic Books house, 1991, pages 81-82. Dr. Al Sayid Ala' Al Din Al Qazwini, Ideological Matters, pages 61-74. For more information see ImamAli.netStudy # 4: The Discourse of Distorting the Koran

The imamate theme and its elevation to the level of ideology raised the question about the reason behind the negligence of the Koranic text to speak frankly about the imamate of Ahl Al Bayt, since it is such a fundamental issue in the Islamic faith. This led some imamate ghulat, not all and not all Shia of course, to claim that the Koran has been altered by omitting the verses in it that spoke frankly of the imamate of imam Ali and Ahl Al Bayt. Such ghulat backed up their false claims with weak and fabricated narrations which they ascribed to some of the imams of Ahl Al Bayt while the imams are innocent of such narrations.

These narrations have been mentioned by Al Kilini in "Al Kafi", Mohamad Bin Hassan Al Safar al Qumi in "Insight of Ranks", Ali Bin Ibrahim Al Qumi in "His Interpretation", also Al Ayashi, Ibn Furat and others. However, this opinion did not become the public or the binding opinion of the Imamate Shiism whose Usoli scholars criticized Akhbari narrations and ignored ones that were incompatible with the Holy Koran.

Nevertheless, throughout history, some of the Imamate Shiite's enemies kept bringing up this accusation (which was the making of the ghulat) against all of the Shia in general and used it as a tool to bash them and to charge them with infidelity and a deviated creed.

Dr Musa Kathem Yelmaz made a presentation titled "Shiite Opinion on Koranic Science" during the Istanbul Symposium. He said : "We can say that moderate Shiite scholars refused the claim that the Koran is distorted, especially the ones who lived in the fourth and fifth Hijra

centuries. For example, sheikh Al Suduk who wrote "The Ideologies" book who also died in 381. Another example is the sheikh of the sect, Abu Jafar Al Toosi who wrote "Tafseer Al Tibyan" book, he died in 461. Also Abu Ali Al Tabarsi who wrote "Majma' Al Bayan" (ie Compound Statement), he died in 548. Unfortunately they only deny addition to the Koran but do not deny the deduction of it prominently. They said that the deletion of some of the Koranic verses is a matter that's not agreed upon, but they also add : "What's correct of our sect violates (the preceding statement)", as Al Tabarsi admitted in his interpretation".

Yelmaz used a number of Shiite scholars' saying throughout history who confirmed the safety of the Koran from distortion, for example sheikh Al Baha'i who said : "They differed on whether addition or deduction occurred in it (the Koran). Truth is, the Koran is safe of both kinds of distortions". (1) Also Al Tabarsi conveyed one of Al Murtada's sayings : "The scientific validity of the conveyance of the Koran is like the scientific validity of different countries, big incidents, great accidents, famous books and written Arabic poetry". (2) Also Mohamad Jawad Al Balaghi Al Najafi, a scholar of the twentieth century and the the interpreter of "The Almighty's Blessings", who said : "The Koran that is between our hands is the same Koran that was sent down to Mohamad (pbuh) and not more than that.". He also added : "Whoever claims that we say more than that is a liar". (3) "And the efforts of the recent theologian (meaning Miraz Hussein Al Nouri) in his book "Chapter فصل الخطاب of Discourse" have failed. All the narrations that he used as references to support the claim that the Koran is missing some verses, all that effort have failed. He considered all the narrations were those of the imams, Al Ayashi, Al Furats narrations and others. Indeed, when one closely investigates such narrations, one will find out that their isnads (a chain of narrators going back to the original narrator) are most likely not sincere". (4)

Also Ayatu Allah Al Kho'i who said : "Among the Shiite scholars, it's well known and understood that the Koran has not been distorted". He also added : "A group of Shiite theologians and a group of Sunni theologians went to say that the Koran is distorted. Both groups base their beliefs on uncertainty and taweel (interpretation based on personal reasoning)" (5).

Al Tabataba'i, a contemporary interpreter who wrote "The Scale's Interpretation", said : "A group of Shiite and Hashawi theologians, also a group of Sunni theologians went to say that the Koran is distorted. Meaning deduction (of the Koran) or changing in pronunciation or arrangement (of verses), but that there has been no addition (of words or verses to the Koran). No Muslim has accepted this". (6)

Dr Musa Kathem Yelmaz added : "The scholars who denied the distortion in the Koran used the following holy verse : "We have, without doubt sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)." To prove the maintenance of the Koran and its protection from distortion, change and exchange (of words or verses...). Also historical necessity and the narrations pertaining to the inevitability of the adherence to the Koran are the most prominent indications to the lack of distortion (in the Koran). The most important of such narrations is the "Thaqalayn" hadith. This hadith, according to Shiite scholars who don't believe the the Koran has

been perverted, is considered a strong evidence against the distortion of the Koran. In this hadith the great messenger (pbuh) ordered the Muslim community to adhere to the Koran and his house hold. Then, according to the hadith, the adherence to the Koran is valid until Judgment Day. Therefore, the distortion of the Koran is assertively void. (7) The narrations that speak about perversion of the Koran are not used as reference. This is because most of the narrations that speak about the deletion of some verses of the Koran are weak and none of such narrations are mutawatir ones. None of such hadiths are full of peremptory proofs that force one's mind to accept them. On the contrary, all of such hadiths are ahad (narrated by a single individual), and the ones that are authentic are not safe from fabrication. Anyone who has the least bit of reasoning would know that what was mentioned in "Chapter of Discourse **فصل الخطاب**" (that two thirds of the Koran falls between prerequisites and penalty as in the Holy Koran "If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, ...") is fabricated. (8) It's also well known that in some of Ahl Al Bayt narrations, there has been mentioned that Ali has collected a mas-haf (a book that refers in most cases to the Koran). However, the fact that Ali has made his own collection (of the book) does not prove that his collections differed from Abu Bakr's (may God be pleased with him) collection in any of the religious matters unless it was in the arrangement of some of the verses (of the Koran). If Ali's mas-haf differed from what the companions have collected, he would have opposed them by protesting (against them) and defending his collections. He would not have given up simply as they opposed his collections. Also there hasn't been a narration by him (may God be pleased with him) that pertains to the possibility of him using a verse of "his wilaya" (from the Koran) to acknowledge his rights to it. (9) Is it possible for a rational person to claim that all of the verses that the enemies feel have been deleted from the Koran, all of these verses were about the wilaya (of Ali) or that they were hidden from the Muslim public? Or can it be imaginable that Ali (may God be pleased with him) would keep silent about the distortion of the Koran so that he would protect the unity of Muslims and so that they wouldn't be divided? Isn't perversion of the Koran considered the greatest turmoil in religion?". Dr. Yelmaz commented on that by saying : "It's apparent to the researchers the existence of a great movement against the belief of the perversion of the Koran and those who claim it.

This movement started with sheikh Al Sadouk ,who died in 381, and still exists until this day with a lot of followers in the past. Also there has existed, since the past, some Akhbaris who held on to weak narrations that support distortion. Scholars who oppose such people always try to answer them scientifically. Therefore, such people, who claimed the distortion of the Koran, were not only opposed by the Sunnis but were also opposed by the Shiite scholars themselves. Despite all of this, it has not been easy for moderate Shiite scholars to defeat a belief, such as the distortion of the Koran, that has lived and has been strengthened throughout history in the Shiite community. It is for this reason that we could meet people in the Shiite community who actually believe in the

distortion of the Koran. However, as we have mentioned earlier, it is difficult to find such opinions among the Shiite scholars and this is an issue that is disliked by every Muslim with a sound creed." (10)

Dr. Mohamad Baker Hujati, a professor at the College of Islamic Studies and Divinities in Tehran, replied to Dr. Yelmaz by introducing a paper titled "Compiling the Koran during the era of the Messenger (pbuh)". He said in it : "The use of the word "mas-haf" by the messenger of God (pbuh) and by his contemporaries during his era, tells us clearly what the senior Shiite clerics believed about the compiling of the Koran at the time of the prophet... This is in addition to other narrations where the words "mas-haf" or "masahef" were used during the life of the messenger of God. All this frankly indicates that the Koran was compiled during his blessed life because "mas-haf" means what's written between the two book covers... The narration that speaks about the debate that took place during Abu Bakr time regarding searching for a name for the Koran is a fabricated narration. This is because the narration mentions that the word "mas-haf" was taken from the Habashi language". (11)

Dr Hujati used what imam Al Kho'i said about the theme of distortion of the Koran as a reference, he said : " It is necessary to mention a summary of what Al Kho'i presented regarding this matter. He said : "We have to search for the contents of such narrations, this was divided to four categories: Category One : Narrations that show the distortion actually took place.

My answer to such narrations is that what seems to be apparent from some of the narrations is that the interpretation of distortion depends on the readers (and how they see it). The rest of the narrations speak about distortion in the sense of interpreting some verses in a false manner that has nothing to do with what the verses actually mean.

Category Two : Narrations that pointed out that some verses mentioned the names of the imams (pbuh) and there's a number of such narrations. The answer to this is that the narrations point to the interpretation of the verses (that refer to the names of the imams) and not the actual mentioning of the imams in the Koran itself. Therefore, the names of the imams are not physically mentioned in the Koran but the interpretation of the verses leads to that. If this explanation is not sufficient enough then such narrations must be set aside (and ignored) since they violate the Book and the Sunna and also the precluding evidence of distortion.

Category Three : Narrations that speak about distortion as in addition and deletion. Also that the Islamic Umma after the death of the prophet (pbuh) changed some words and replaced with new ones. The answer to this, setting aside the fact that the isnads for such narrations are weak, is that it violates the Book and the Sunna. It also violates the consensus of Muslims on the absence of (human) additions to the Koran and that all of what's written between the two book covers is the content of the Koran. Examples of sheikhs who agreed with the consensus are sheikh Al Mufid, sheikh Al Toosi, sheikh Al Baha'i and others from the greatest of Shiite scholars.

Category Four : Narrations that point out that distortion of the Koran was done only in the sense of deletion. The answer to this is that the meaning

of addition in ameer al mu'mineen's (pbuh) mas-haf is the interpretation of what the meaning of the words could be. Or an explanation to what the revelation really meant. If it's not possible to accept such an explanation then we should ignore such narrations based on the fact that they violate the Book and the Sunna.

Most of these narrations have weak isnad according to Shiite.

A number of these narrations were mentioned in "Revelation and Distortion" and "The Readings", two books for Ahmad Bin Mohamad Al Siyari. Shiite scholars agreed on the corruption of his doctrine, his weak hadiths, his estranged narrative stance, uses a lot of mursal hadiths (hadiths with no isnads) and also believes in reincarnation. The theologian, Al Nouri, used a lot of Al Siyari's narrations and mentioned them in his book "Chapter of Discourse فصل الخطاب". For this reason, Shiite scholars do not rely on what's found in the book "Distortion of God's Book" and they prohibited publishing it as if they considered it one of many misleading books.... In addition to all this, we have tens of books that were written by Imamate Shiite scholars where they deny distortion (of the Koran) or they answer those who claimed it:. (12)

Dr Hujati added : " The narrations that are contained in the Sunni hadith collections regarding this issue are plenty. These narrations explicitly point out that the Koran has been distorted to a great extent. However, we Shiites, do not pay attention to such Sunni narrations nor do we pay attention to the narrations found in Shiite hadith collections since most of these narrations, but all of them are fabricated. Therefore, we do not accuse Sunnis of believing that the Koran is distorted and the Sunnis also should not accuse us of believing in distortion.

"Lastly I say : Since the term of prophecy of the prophets (pbut) was limited, none of their original books and paper survived but they were destroyed until eternity. However, the term of prophecy for our prophet is not time restrained. It continues until Judgment Day and therefore his book remained preserved from distortion, saved from any action. The Glorious Koran, which is our underpin when it comes to following Islam, is one to all of us. We do not differ, even in the slightest bit, on the (authenticity) of our heavenly Book. Despite the fact that we accuse one another of believing in the distortion of the Koran, practically we recite one Koran, we follow one Koran and we rely on one Koran.... Muslims, with all of their differences in names and denominations, are the only ones among the followers of heavenly Books who agree on one copy of their heavenly Book, the Glorious Koran. It is found with all of the different Islamic sects.

The Koran that's recited by a Shiite and a Sunni, the Koran that's recited by an Imamate Shiite, a Zaidi and Ismaili, also the Koran that is recited by a Hanafi, a Shafi'i, a Maliki and a Hanbali Sunni is the same Koran and doesn't differ in any words or even letters." (13)

Then he asked rehotrically : "Do we not find in the fact that the Koran has been preserved from all distortion in all Islamic sects and has been intact and one among the Muslim Umma, do we not find a sign to regard? A sign that we should strive to unify the word? Doesn't that fact, ie the unity of the Holy Koran among all different Islamic groups, push us to stop

defaming each other and accusing each other of believing in distortion (of the Koran)? Doesn't it make us want to stop exposing such narrations that speak about distortion of the Koran found in both sects and some of it are weak while others can be interpreted to have a different meaning? From ancient time until now, we do not see a difference in our masahaf (Koran). We, Shiites and Sunnis, do not own any other mas-haf (Koran). If a difference is found in one mas-haf (different from other masahaf), we consider it distorted." (14)

During the International Symposium on Shiites which took place in Istanbul, Dr Ali Ozak confirmed that the Shiites believe in the Koran that descended on Mohamad. Nevertheless, there are some differences regarding the consistency of the Koran and its contents. However, Shiites of today believe in the same mas-haf that the rest of the Islamic world believes in. He also said : " We have not found a copy (of the Koran) which contents violate the contents of the Koran we possess at hand, not in Iran and no where else during our search for one. Therefore, there is no disagreement between Sunnis and Shiites on the authenticity of the Koran but there is a difference in the way it is interpreted." (15)

Dr Aouni Elkhan also, as well, confirmed : "Today's Imamate Shiite accept the mas-haf that exists between our hands. Also the enemies of the Shiites ,who accuse Shiites of believing in the distortion of the Koran, do not rely on strong evidence to support their claim. It's possible that the reason for the rise of accusations, that the Shiites do not believe the existing Koran is complete, is based on Al Kulaini's narrations and its likes. He said : "Whoever claims that he/she compiled the complete Koran as it was revealed is a liar. No one compiled it and memorized it as God the Almighty revealed it except for Ali Bin Abi Talib and the Imams after him (pbuh). (16) There's no doubt that solving this problem isn't difficult if we carefully studied the well known Shiite scholars books. Sheikh Al Mufid says : "A group of the Imamate Shiite said that the Koran isn't missing a word, or a verse or a chapter.

However, Ali's taweel and the interpretation of its (Koran) true meaning and the reason for its revelation, all found in in mas-haf ameer al mu'mineen (pbuh) were deleted. This was firmly established and revealed although it isn't the word of God found in the miraculous Koran. Taweel (interpretation) the Koran could be called Koran. (Al Mufid, The Early Essays, 67-68).

Al Sayyid Mahdi Al Hussein Al Rouhani commented on Dr Aouni Elkhan's words, especially his saying : "Today's Imamate Shiites accept the mas-haf etc....". He commented : "This (sentence) makes the assumption that the Imamate Shiites didn't accept the existing Koran in the old days. That is a lie and a fabrication repeated by Shiite's enemies. Such fabrications influenced our writer (Dr Elkhan), he spoke half a truth while the fabricated lies stayed in his head. Truth is, Shiites firstly and lastly do not recognize a mas-haf other than the one in their hands and in the hands of the rest of Muslims." (18)

I do not believe that the claim, that Shiites believe in the distortion of the Koran, is worthwhile. Especially after the Shiites have denied it over the years and insisted on saying that the Koran is secure and has been

preserved by God the Almighty. Hence, we can say with confidence : All Muslims, thank God, belonging to all different sects have one common and firm creed upon which they do not differ.

- 1) Mohamad Jawad Al Balaghi Preface, page 27.
2) Compiled Statements, sentence 1, page 83.
3) Al Balaghi Preface, page 26.
4) Al Balaghi Preface, page 27.
5) Al Kho'i Interpretation, page 201.
6) International Scientific Symposium on Shiism in History and in the Present Time, page 200
7) Al Kho'i, pages 210-211
8) The Scale, 12, 116, and Makarim Al Shirazi, Namouna Interpretation, 21, 30.
9) The Scale, pages 12, 116.
10) International Scientific Symposium on Shiism, pages 201-201
11) Ibid, page 206
12) Ibid, page 208
13) Ibid, page 210
14) Ibid, page 211
15) Ibid, page 242
16) Al Kilini, Fundamentals from Al Kafi, 441/1
17) International Scientific Symposium on Shiism, page 436
18) Ibid, page 447.

Study # 5: Al Taqiya (Dissimulation)

After we discussed ghulu and ghulat, we should mention an important theme that relates to the Shiite/Sunni relations. The theme is "al taqiyah", which has played a negative role in worsening the relationship between the two groups. It has also become a problem to a lot of Sunnis that affected their dealings with their Shiite brothers. Some Sunnis accuse any Shiite who tries to get close to them and declares his refusal to the extremist views, or declares his respect to the companions for example, they accuse him of practicing taqiyah (dissimulation). I, personally, declared my rejection of the imamate thought and also my refusal to the principle of taqiyah and wrote a number of books refuting the imamate theory. Despite all of that, I still faced a number of Sunni skeptics regarding the truth behind my position. During the International Scientific Symposium about Shiites that took place in Istanbul, Dr Mohamad Said Ramadan Al Bouti, spoke about taqiyah and the problem of trust between the two sects. He said : "When there is no trust (between the two sects), then the efforts made to bring the sects closer to each other will not be feasible. To build this trust , only one thing has to be done and that is for our Shiite brothers to declare that the taqiyah era has passed and ended. Taqiyah was a necessity in the past especially during the Umayyad era. This is because necessities make prohibitions permissible. Today, there is no need for hiding some of our beliefs and show otherwise. To build trust between us, let us be frank with each other and let the token of this reconciliation be the declaration that the taqiyah era has ended." (1) Therefore, it is necessary to shed some light on the the truth of "al

taqiyah". Is it a fundamental belief to Shiites or only a part of their religion? Do they still practice it until this day? When the Sunnis accuse the Shiites of practicing taqiyah, they rely on a famous Shiite hadith. The hadith is about imam Al Sadik when he says : "Taqiyah is my religion and the religion of my fathers. There's no religion for someone who doesn't practice taqiyah". Usually, Shiite scholars justify this hadith as a Koranic and a rational principle that anyone under extreme pressure or is scared for his life and wealth resorts to it. God pardoned Ammar Bin Yasser who spoke words of infidelity in front of Quraysh while being tortured. The Almighty said : "save him who is forced thereto and whose heart is still content with the Faith ", Al Nahl, 106. He also said : " Let not the believers take disbelievers for their friends in preference to believers. Whoso doeth that hath no connection with Allah unless (it be) that ye but guard yourselves against them, taking (as it were) security. Allah biddeth you beware (only) of Himself. Unto Allah is the journeying.", Al Imran, 28. Shiites resorted to practicing taqiyah in times of necessity under specific circumstances. They didn't need to practice it under normal conditions and do not practice it today.

If the Shiites did indeed practice taqiyah in past forgotten circumstances when they were still a small group, then it wouldn't be comprehensible for them to use it today after they became a large sect of millions. The rules that apply to secret parties do not apply to nations. What can they hide when they have published books about their opinions and theories for hundreds of years now?

The problem, in fact, doesn't lie here. I do not believe that Shiites in general were practicing taqiyah at one point or even know it, let alone their imams of Ahl Al Bayt. It, instead, was adhered to them unjustly by the ghulat who used to thrust themselves in the Shiite ranks and claim to belong to Ahl Al Bayt sect while Ahl Al Bayt were innocent of them. The ghulat used to try to ascribe extremist sayings and views to the Imams of Ahl Al Bayt. Examples of such extremist views were the claims of prophet hood or even divinity to the Imams, divine imamate, infallibility, and the likes. The Imams used to deny such claims openly in public. They also used to do the opposite of what the ghulat used to ascribe to them. Thus, the ghulat found themselves pressured to justify the apparent contradiction between the sayings of the imams and their denial to the ghulat's fabricated lies by claiming that they used taqiyah.

According to Dr Musa Al Musawi, during the symposium in Istanbul about Shiites, he said : " Imams of Ahl Al Bayt would never think of taqiyah in that sense, it would not even cross their mind. Taqiyah is a misfortune from which every perversion, deviation and fad emanated. It appeared in our creed, we Imamate Shiite, and through it we interpreted "no" to mean "yes" and vice versa. Based on it we gave the apparent words and actions hidden meanings that were not meant by people who spoke it. With it, we eliminated the prominent proofs and texts of the Koran, the sunna of the prophet, Imam Ali's sayings and actions and the rest of Imams. With taqiyah, we interpreted the prominent (Koranic) texts as we wished. Taqiyah is the legal adaptation for juristic deduction of the text to suit our wishes, intentions and purposes. The last thing I can say about taqiyah is

that the role of taqiyah in destroying the intellectual entity of man is the same as the role of drugs in destroying the will entity of man. Anyone who takes the path of drugs confuses goodness with evil. In the same way, anyone who takes the path of taqiyah confuses right with wrong. Thus, I like to refer to taqiyah as the "opium of Shiites"." (2)

I disagree with Dr Al Musawi in attributing taqiyah to the Shiite public. I confine it historically to the ghulat and extremists who used to make up their own views and ascribe them to Shiites. Then they would read history, which is the opposite of their claims, in a reversed manner where they make white black and vice versa. There is no historical evidence for the adoption of the ghulat's sayings by the Shiite public. Let alone their compliance to excersizing taqiyah when dealing with their Muslim brothers.

It is wrong to hold the large Shiite audiences with their various trends, parties and sects the responsibility of the existence of a fabricated misunderstood hadith about taqiyah in their past hadith books. It is wrong to make this a fundamental principle of their ideology and to look at them skeptically until Judgment Day. It's also not right to ignore the massive developments that took place and still take place in their ranks, and to not believe them when declaring their refusal of the taqiyah principle and practice. If we are looking for trust between Shiites and Sunnis, we cannot expect the Shiites to pass on a statement to declare their refusal of the belief of the taqiyah principle, as sheikh Al Bouti asked. This is because the Shiites are not a political party, a small gang or a limited group where all of its members are complied to follow what their leader decides. We will keep seeing some Shiites who will allege this hadith. The important thing is the general view of the Shiite public to the principle of taqiyah and the possibility of adopting it as an approach to the analyze history. Also the evaluation of the statements of the Imams of Ahl Al Bayt and the ratification of their attitudes and policies, or the lack of it. This issue is of concern to Shiites before it is a concern of others since it constitutes an important tool to understanding the Shiite thought and to identifying the real Ahl Al Bayt's heritage and distinguish it from exotic theories.

----- 1) Ibid, page 727.

2) Ibid, page 743.

Chapter Two: Primary Sources for Legislation

Study #1: The Holy Koran

The general Sunni and Shiite public almost fully agree on the authority of the Holy Koran. The Holy Koran is considered the primary and the more firm source to Sunnis and Shiites. It's used as a reference to other sources and anything that goes against it gets tossed away. The research about the authenticity of the Koran is considered one of the most important researches in the science of fundamentalism in Shiism. Especially research on the explicitness of words, unequivocal and equivocal, instruction, prohibition, inclusiveness, exclusiveness, the absolute, the evident, the understood, the articulated, the abrogator and the abrogated and so on.

In the early times, some Akhbaris were skeptical about the authenticity of practicing the externals of the Koran. They didn't allow the direct dealing

with it and understanding it except through Ahl Al Bayt's narrations and interpretation of it. The birth of the Usooli school (based on juristic deduction) in the fifth hijra century by the three sheikhs, Al Mufid, Al Murtada, Al Toosi and some great leaders in recent centuries, all that led the Akhbaris to retreat from some of their sayings. They retreated from saying that the Koran is inauthentic and that we cannot deal with it directly. They also reinforced the belief that the Koran is the primary source of religion since it's a definitive frequent source that cannot be matched with any other source.

Unfortunately a lot of Sunni researchers, while studying about Shiites, do not pay attention to the conflict between the two schools, Akhbari and Usooli. They ignore the fact that the Usoolis, and they are the overwhelming majority of Shiites, have abandoned much of the Akhbari beliefs for centuries now. Dr Ali Ozak is an example as he said : "The Shiites have deliberately interpreted Koranic verses and also hadiths as they wished. They did this any time they couldn't find proofs from the Koran to support their beliefs...In a lot of cases, Shiites rely on Ahl Al Bayt narrations, since they believe in the infallibility of the Imams and Ahl Al Bayt. For this reason, they put a lot of weight on Ahl Al Bayt narrations to interpret the Koran and they say : God has entrusted the interpretation of the Koran to the Imam." (1) He also added : "Twelver Imamate Shiism sees that the Koran includes concepts of abrogation, unequivocal and equivocal, inclusiveness and exclusiveness, connection and disconnection, duties, judgments, orthodoxy, manners, lawfulness, interdiction, wiliness, permission, explicitness, obscurity, limitation, and beginning. As for knowing the definition and the difference among these concepts, that's only possible for people who had divine revelation descend onto them and hence only the prophet and his household. A hadith about the prophet (pbuh) says : "Whoever interprets the Koran according to his own wishes will perish, even if his interpretation was correct". In another narration : "he has committed infidelity". Ozak used mula Mohsen Al Kashani in the second preface in his interpretation titled "Al Safi" : "Knowledge of the Koran belongs to Ahl Al Bayt...and separated between you and we know it...and a narration's isnad that goes back to him (pbuh), he said : "We're the ones who are firm in (Koranic) knowledge and we know its interpretation."".

Also what Al Ayashi narrated about Abu Abdullah (pbuh) in his interpretation, he said : "God still sends from us, Ahl Al Bayt, someone who teaches all of His Book (Koran)". (2)

Despite the existence of such narrations which agree with the Imamate theory and which give the Imams of Ahl Al Bayt the role of interpreters of the Koran, Shiites throughout history didn't commit to a special interpretation of the Koran. They didn't hold a special interpretation away from the Arabic language and the explicitness of the Koran. They also didn't retain a particular ta'weel except for some Koranic vocabulary such as "the Book" or "the straight path".

This is recorded by Dr. Ozak, as he